

"I Don't Know the Man!"

Thomas Robinson, *God's Kingdom Breaks In!* 5, February 19, 2017

Matthew 26:63b – 27:10 (Cf. Mk 14:61-15:1; Lk 22:67-23:1; Jn 18:15-18, 25-28)

The High Priest – Frustrated with Jesus

⁶³ ... And the high priest said to Jesus, "I command you under oath before the living God, that you **tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.**"

⁶⁴ Jesus says to him, "You spoke those words. Still I tell you, after this you will see **the Son of Man** seated at the **right hand of the Power** and coming on the **clouds of heaven.**"

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered **blasphemy**. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgment?"

They answered, "**He deserves death!**" ⁶⁷ Then they **spit** into his face and **hit** him with fists. Others **slapped** him, ⁶⁸ saying, "**Prophecy** for us, **Messiah!** Who is it that struck you?"

Peter in the Courtyard: 'I Don't Know Him'

⁶⁹ Now **Peter** was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a serving woman came up to him and said, "You also were with **Jesus the Galilean.**"

⁷⁰ But **he denied** it before them all, saying, "**I don't know what you're talking about.**"

⁷¹ And when he went out into the entryway, another serving woman saw him, and she said to those there, "He was with **Jesus of Nazareth.**"

⁷² And again he **denied** it with an oath: "**I don't know the man.**"

⁷³ After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you also are one of them, for **your accent gives you away.**"

⁷⁴ Then he began to curse with an oath, "**I don't know the man!**"

And immediately **a rooster crows.** ⁷⁵ And **Peter remembered** the saying of **Jesus**, "Before a rooster crows, **you will deny me** three times." (26:34) And he went out and **wept bitterly.**

The Council of Chief Priests Hands Jesus Over to Pilate

27:¹ When dawn arrived, all the chief priests and the elders of the people held a council meeting against Jesus so as to put him to death. ² And when they had bound him, they led him away and **handed him over** to Pilate the governor.

Judas Returns to the Priests in Remorse

³ Then when **Judas**, the one who had **handed him over** to them, **saw that he was condemned**, he was **filled with regret** and took the thirty pieces of silver back to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying, "**I sinned by handing over innocent blood.**"

They said, "**What's that to us?** That's your own business."

⁵ And when he had thrown the **pieces of silver into the temple**, he departed, and he went and **hanged himself.**

⁶ But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is a **price for blood.**" ⁷ But when they met in council, they bought with them **the field of the potter** as a burial place for **foreigners.** ⁸ Therefore that field has been called a **Field of Blood** to this day. ⁹ That filled up what was said through the prophet **Jeremiah** when it says that they took the **thirty pieces of silver** as the **price** of one on whom a **price** was set – the one from Israel's sons on whom they had set a **price** – ¹⁰ and they gave the silver for the field of the **potter**, "just as the Lord commanded me."

Isaiah 50:6 (Part of the songs of the suffering servant)

⁶I gave my back to those who strike,| and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;| I hid not my face| from disgrace and spitting.

Zechariah 11:12-13

¹¹ ... And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter" – the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter.

Jeremiah 19:1-2 (Prophetic actions around a potter, Jer. 18-19)

¹ Thus says the LORD, "Go, buy a potter's earthenware pot, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests, ² and go out to...the Potsherd Gate"

Matthew 16: 21-23 (After Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah, Son of God)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me. For you are not thinking the things of God, but the things of humans."

The Mystery of Jesus

Mt carries us from the night hearing at the High Priest's house to the capital trial before Pilate.

He shows us people who in various ways can't grasp Jesus, his identity, action, or aim. The HP & council, sure, but also his disciples, Judas and Peter. Jesus is handed over & over, but none know him. Mt wants us to learn. Each interaction challenges knowledge & reflection.

Peter's denials are bracketed by hostile chief priests, despairing Judas, & prophetic judgment.

For all, Jesus posed a basic challenge: to imagine and trust a God whose kingdom, power, action are profoundly different from all the ways we humans know & expect power to work.

The High Priest and the Remorse of Judas

At the hearing, the HP asks about a truth falsely – Messiah, son of God – to charge Jesus with deceiving the people & treason to Rome. Jesus turns it to embodying God's people – son of Man – bringing them to God. The Priests' weapons are ridicule, disgrace, violence (Is 50).

At dawn, they formally convene in the Temple to 'hand over' Jesus to the pagan governor.

Judas had given up on Jesus. He 'handed over' Jesus to the HP to stop Jesus' crazy focus on death rather than victory. But he knows Jesus doesn't deserve death. In deep remorse he confesses sin to 'God's priests.' But they have no divine forgiveness, only uncaring power.

He sees he's chosen death, throws the silver deep into the godless temple, & hangs himself.

The priests, worried about ritual purity, buy a potter's field. Mt uses that door to open us to meditate on scenes from Jeremiah in words from Zechariah about God's radical judgment.

The Tears of Peter

Peter had not given up. Somehow Jesus would become king. Peter may fight and die for him; save him for the world. Courageously, he doesn't run when they identify him. But he must deny his identity. He moves; he watches. Again he pretends; and again. Only the crowing brings reality. Jesus knew him exactly. Jesus knows what he's doing. Peter can't save Jesus!

Peter weeps. Not for cowardice. Yes, he lied about knowing Jesus. But he weeps because it was really true. He didn't know him! He loved and followed him but in his own world. He couldn't imagine what Jesus was doing, what was coming, Jesus' reality, kingdom. Bitter tears for a collapsing world, a lost, heroic Peter. They wash him for a new forgiven life to be discovered.